

REMARKS

Prior to entry of this Amendment, Claims 1-30 are pending in the present application. It is gratefully acknowledged that independent Claim 27 and its dependent Claims 28-30, have been allowed; and that dependent Claims 9, 10, 15 and 16 have been objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim but would be allowable over the prior art in the record if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim, and any intervening claim. Claims 1-8, 11-14, and 17-26 have been rejected.

Please cancel Claims 3, 8-9, 13-15 and 18-26 without prejudice.

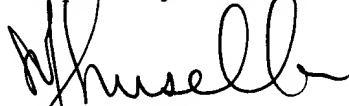
Regarding the Examiner's rejection of independent Claim 11 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b), Claim 11 has been amended to include the allowable subject matter of Claim 15 and its intervening claims (namely Claims 13 and 14). In view of the above, Claim 11 is believed to be in condition for allowance.

Regarding the Examiner's rejection of independent Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e), Claim 1 has been amended to include the allowable subject matter of Claim 9 and its intervening claims (namely Claims 3 and 8). In view of the above, Claim 1 is believed to be in condition for allowance.

In light of the amendments, it is respectfully submitted that independent Claims 1 and 11 overcome the stated rejections. Without conceding the patentability per se of dependent Claims 2, 4-7, 10, 12 and 16-17, it is respectfully submitted that these claims also overcome the rejections by virtue of their dependence on their respective independent claims.

Claims 1-2, 4-7, 10-12, 16-17 and 27-30 are believed to be in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner believe that a telephone conference or personal interview would facilitate resolution of any remaining matters, the Examiner may contact Applicants' representative at the number given below.

Respectfully submitted,



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